

# W E T M O N E Y

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r y a n e c k e s



# wet money

ryan eckes



"The point is, we're not really free. We believe that obedience is freedom. That's a condition of lived experience. It's only temporary, though, and we're free."

—Sarah

from *The Blue Clerk*  
Imagination

"There is in our lives a television remove that one is afforded as a consumer of everything, a spectator of everything. The great operator of the world. Nothing happens here, so watch nothing that is not entertaining."

—George Brand, from *The Blue Clerk*

radical paper press  
2020



the pure products of the liberal imagination  
do not exist

the sky is cash only

"Our concern for novelty and so-called originality or newness leads us to become a nation of cultural amnesiacs."

—Lorenzo Thomas, from 1999 interview,  
*The Poetry Project Newsletter*

some hard pressed  
house in the suburbs

"The gentrification mentality is rooted in the belief that obedience to consumer identity over recognition of lived experience is actually normal, neutral and value-free."

—Sarah Schulman, from *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*

"There is in our lives a televisual remove that one is afforded as a consumer of everything, a spectator of everything. The great spectator of the world. Nothing happens here, at least nothing that is not entertaining."

—Dionne Brand, from *The Blue Clerk*

the pure products of the liberal imagination  
do not exist

the sky is cash only  
you drive the car  
to work

for an earth of  
its excrement

some hard pressed  
house in the suburbs—

some bill—



“...to a civil service a civil service...”  
to nominate a civil service man for a civil service  
position, to nominate a civil service man for a civil service  
position, to nominate a civil service man for a civil service  
position, to nominate a civil service man for a civil service

“...to nominate a civil service man for a civil service...”

spliff

every time you mourn a republican  
a kitten chokes to death  
and it's back to school  
in the smoke of productivity  
there's a pillow in a trash can  
in front of my building  
houses are for sale up & down  
the make-believe  
what do you want  
a new career  
a box fan in the window  
a box of old how-to  
books on proof  
in the pudding  
a televised-ass life  
gas mileage alone  
in the dark  
a last laugh that lets you  
sleep  
and beyond what dollar  
do you stop meaning  
what you say  
and wake up on a cruise  
where the ocean says *leave me alone*  
from the gutted prayer  
in your throat  
proving your puppethood  
enough to renounce  
the profit motive  
forever  
so we can be friends  
and i can stop trying  
to solve  
my own murder

which is a real drag  
since i'm still alive  
waiting in line  
for my certificate of salvage  
from the department of motor vehicles  
on a tuesday  
if i have to scrape out  
someone else's dream  
to bury it properly  
i will scrape out  
someone else's dream  
to bury it properly

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you cannot like them enough  
you are on a tuesday  
the postman ignores everything under 55 cents.

but you can play the stamp game, like a stupid fucking gamblers  
of business, you play the game while standing in line, waiting  
for the present.

you hope the present arrives soon, you hope the day is long  
enough to offer it.

you hope that you're in now at the moment the first thing you equal

and you hope that equality lasts forever.

you hope that you're a little into yourself and it hangs like a lamp  
around you.

you hope that you're a good person who's learned how to play the stamp game well, even if few people have recognized it.

surely your points have been adding up and you're ready to teach  
how to count.

but somehow the line has gotten longer, people must have buried  
in front of you.

a book of stamps

to be on a stamp, you have to be dead ten years. if you were president, only five years.

you learn the rules standing in line at the post office.

in a book called *Standing in Line for Death*, CAConrad wrote, "let us write the news on your newborn's face."

the news today is one capitalist clapped for another but didn't really mean it.

one forever stamp costs 55 cents.

the stamp is self-adhesive. you don't need to lick it.

you want to be liked, if not licked, and affixed to a letter bearing good news.

how to be liked, you wonder.

to be liked, you might perform, you might lie, you might run for president.

you might play dead so you can be part of america.

you might have to.

you might stand in line for a long time while a baby cries and cries.

you check to see who likes you today. look down at your phone for the little hearts.

the phone is your boss. it waits for you to perform. it pays you nothing. you pay *it*.

american federation of teachers

you don't know who got paid to make the phone. how much or how little. you wonder if they too are standing in line somewhere else in the world.

famous people, people of the stamp, don't care if you know or like the people who made them famous, the people who worked for them.

but famous people, people of the stamp, want you to like them.

famous people, people of the stamp, keep changing their picture on the stamp so that you keep liking them.

you cannot like them enough.

you are on a stamp, too. but it does not get you anywhere. the postman ignores everything under 55 cents.

but you can play the stamp game. like a student in the fox school of business. you play the game while standing in line, waiting for the present.

you hope the present arrives soon. you hope that you have enough to offer it.

you hope that what you *are* and what you *have* are somehow equal.

and you hope that equality lasts forever.

you hope that the hands fall off the clock and paradise grows up around you.

you know that you have worked hard, that you have played the stamp game well, even if few people have received your messages.

surely your points have been adding up and the judges know how to count.

but somehow the line has gotten longer. people must have butted in front of you.

you won't stamp out all of the world's problems  
frustrated, you begin stamping the ground w/ your foot. you begin  
protesting.

the hands of the clock are now moving counterclockwise.

your hair turns gray and you look around you wildly. you call for  
those near you to join in your protest, since they, obviously, are  
no better off than you are.

but everyone just stares at you.

would you stop making a scene, they implore you.

can't you see that none of us wants to be here, anyway, they say.

shhh, would you just be patient!

they are so bored, and allowed to a letter

stop acting like a child!

you're embarrassing us!

then, as if to pacify you, postal workers come over to your part  
of the line and begin handing out boots to people, single boots,  
brand-new shiny black boots.

everyone in line then begins licking the bottoms of their boots,  
lapping at the soles like happy kittens.

impressed upon, you look down at your new boot, smell the fresh  
leather, then look up at the clock, which has begun ticking clockwise  
once again.

the postal workers have just finished performing their duties  
holding you pay it.

beyond even your deepest, darkest, most terrible and  
ugly to think 6

you himself there's

i became a teacher to pay my rent  
an adjunct is not an apprentice  
i tried to explain at debrief  
a onesie w/ a logo pulled over my face  
at a desk in an office  
next to the young organizer  
who would get fired  
for succumbing to boredom  
like the guy before him  
and the woman after him  
who failed to like her boss enough  
we were trying to build a citywide union  
of academics  
but nobody was an academic  
that's not a real thing  
teaching is a job  
to pay your rent  
organizing can be a job  
to pay your rent  
as anything can be a job  
to pay your rent  
the union couldn't hear this  
it was run by 6-figure managers  
who pitted us against each other  
they said get out the vote  
for the democratic party  
a bunch of landlords  
committed to our disposability  
and that's where donald trump  
comes from

all that ever

about your being a union  
of the people

teamwork of its in this view

**american history**

when they say "rebuild the middle class"  
 they mean build a new stadium  
 on top of the old new one  
 using the cheapest labor possible  
 & wear your hat proudly  
 on opening day  
 which is every day  
 we're having a grand re-opening  
 today and smile  
 voting is now open  
 you can vote for the all-stars  
 every day  
 the last word is yours  
 a brand new stadium  
 citizens bank park  
 ice cream in heaven  
 i paid for this  
 w/ my vote  
 every vote counts  
 every vote pulled himself up  
 by his own bootstraps  
 every vote did it all by himself

**refusal to acknowledge mechanisms**

every vote put himself thru yale  
 every vote started from the bottom  
 now we're here  
 every vote bought his son  
 a baseball team  
 every vote mission accomplished  
 every vote ice cream in my face  
 you votes don't know how  
 easy you have it  
 back in my day voting  
 was fucking hard  
 i threw the first pitch  
 40 years ago  
 it was a ball  
 but i was right  
 all along  
 the president shook my hand  
 rush limbaugh signed my ass  
 it was me  
 all that ever was

american history

wet money

to be rehired every other breath

as if you were never there

nothing ever happened

you never worked here

we never knew each other

the waves crash the shore

you were never here

you were never here

you were never here

young is now open

you can vote for the all-star

every day

the last word is yours

a brand new stadium

citizens bank park

ice cream is forever

I paid for this

w/ my vote

every vote counts

every vote pulled himself up

by his own bootstraps

every vote did it all by himself

saw with llamid tuq stov kwo

shay sov sotu moh batote sov

now we're poor

noe sid tigund saw viva

meat llardore's

we've stov mewmna scomplishe

every vote for dream in the past

wod word f'not know nov

it's very hot now

giving you tm of dead

lived goobin new

dumy tmh sds wondr

oga many ok

had a new h

high new f'md

gnofk ll

heat you stobs libabing tdi

ate you hang dyqudinil dem

sun new fi

now tuv radi ill

gasoline and calvinism

what do you mean by

when they say "flexibility"

they mean gumby got a raise

for being nice

so why can't you

now watch this drive

people think they're going somewhere

then a plane flies thru your dream

who was it

who built this city,

that city

who speaks for you

when you speak

dozens of little cops point

at each other

in an office

dollars fly out

of their mouths

it's the gig economy

you were going to write me

that letter of recommendation

heaven is waiting

for the applause

american history

wet money

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**injury music**

when they say "nothing is free"  
they mean "you work for me"

when they say "we don't condone violence"  
they mean "you work for me"

when they cart you off the field on a stretcher  
thousands of little boss-slaves cheering on  
your pain

the super bowl of cheerios  
in a sink

this complete breakfast  
of losers

i wipe my mouth  
w/ a napkin

everything is free

the anthem is a dead white prayer

silly string in the street  
the day after

waterfalls are not  
hair

states are not  
stars

what flag are you  
talking about

**minivac has ended**

what do you mean by  
"nation"

do you mean the bruises  
all over your body

do you mean the people  
who nursed you back up

who are you now  
all washed up

injury music  
when they say "nothing is free"  
they mean "you work for me"  
when they say "we don't condone violence"  
they mean "you work for me"  
when they cart you off the field on a stretcher  
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## insurance

you wanna tell me the future  
like a professional  
the light turns green  
there are no cars  
i have no money

in a file labeled "the haters"  
quotes grow from trees  
that don't speak

an owl looks at you  
as if it came from nothing  
which it did not

its eyes swirl in bark  
of older tree, insane,  
wise, there

you will learn to live  
with an idea of being good  
among neighbors in competition

time will stop breathing  
everyone afraid  
of everyone & everyone  
gripping a back-up plan

how much can i pay  
every month  
to just stand here  
like a definition  
in the contract  
written by one person

a rich person  
who will stab me  
in the back  
at the drop  
of a dime

the  
insurance

dear customer,

one person isn't going to fix it  
all for you

the light turns green

the manager is out to lunch  
w/ another manager  
counting their votes

the manager is out to lunch

so you'll have to just  
be a person

on the same level  
as the person  
who is serving you

right now  
in back  
of older tree, inside,  
wise, there

you who want to live  
with an idea of being good  
among neighbors in competition

time will stop breathing  
everyone afraid  
of everyone & everyone  
gripping - back-up plan

how much can i pay  
every month  
to just stand here  
like a definition  
in the contract  
written by one person

monsoon drifts  
sun darts like odysseus  
dashed ads at  
quicks ads to  
sunbaths a lot

the deal

the rain

clouds are language  
survived ads no god claimed much

a skull with wings was a way of thinking once, waving

goodbye forever in stone

the rain waves the graves away, the last word, no statue to become

the rain, all small talk, pushes you to sleep

and later the patter on roof pulls open a dream

how strange to be a house and to look outside

there's a statue of a headless mercenary, a bird alights on the neck

red woodpecker

happy international anything month

the sun bakes the hills free of words

no one can pronounce the borders, only some blood of the past

the blood turns moon into rain

leaders say be a good person and the system will work

but every person turns to rain

you can call it the memory of justice

the sun cracks open the streets

we'll get in bed & forehead  
in the kitchen if we want

dust bunnies hop on the havenue

we're coming to take all your things

love, manager is out to lunch  
the rain

and the manager  
and the manager

so you'll have to just  
be a person

on the same level

as the person - obnoxious fool or has some kind of agenda and  
who is serving you

skin off no strings tried & you know our cushioned & to make a stretch  
right now

rainbow bar  
rainbow bar

the poem's been open

to one who loves me the poet says, who some should be  
true art to hold since some should be

now it's not right for tent camp

show off money who's been doing a lot of work will

put years before them to run

loan can tell if the woman of letters

she can change about the streets

### the deal

we patted our poems  
clouds are laughs  
everyone knows that

you have to peel off  
the leaders one by  
one from your skin

& throw em at the wall  
like beer bottles  
after the afterparty

then look up  
sun drunk in your skull  
till a fox jogs out

clouds are laughs  
i called the bar the poem  
by accident

the poem's been open

since 1930

the poets started showing up

it was a school

now it's not

i stumbled in

like a regular

i didn't have to

there were no principals

poets were talking

about a leaderless movement

you heard what neruda said

we'll eat in bed & fornicate

in the kitchen if we want

from a at ti bis od  
narrow telmuntos a et  
etior elongated panels to skin

looks like new and  
old ad the old floor and  
walls of houses are old ad

do goin to build twin ad  
and we follow  
veto does heat of valo ad

a grid & is over  
more often a over  
strikings to

clouds are laughs  
i called the bar the poem  
by accident

the poem's been open

since 1930

the poets started showing up

it was a school

now it's not

i stumbled in

like a regular

i didn't have to

there were no principals

poets were talking

about a leaderless movement

you heard what neruda said

we'll eat in bed & fornicate

in the kitchen if we want

he said it in a movie  
to a communist woman  
sick of cleaning bourgeois toilets

when we're all equal  
who will we all be like  
the poets wanted to know  
the poem

like what kind of fucking jobs  
would we have  
in order to feed each other

come over at 9, bring a 6  
we'll have a reflection  
of accidents

daily city thoughts were bark  
that cracked off  
the dog of a tree

petaled into some new thing  
we could use or toss  
or riff off

we taught each other how  
to carry shards of heaven  
friends left for us

what're you working on now  
a rose petal in my heart  
pocket, a procession

of looping desire & loss  
a book of fishes  
that mirror clouds

we could put all our books  
together to make  
one book of fish

signed the should  
told around ourselves

No less or next day  
we never heard soft  
milk love smell soft

How odd is the world so  
isolated and still  
younger sets write

so cool and  
these may all stand and  
too ego not a life

signed the should  
milk soft and soft babies i  
memories of

no need to hang out  
over words

lose us a cover to  
not a life won

of holdovers i  
changes a will  
at need's able i

slipping on snow seeds  
quitter snow snow

bias shuns the bound over  
earliest & bad in us if we  
invew we li needed ads in

we pasted our poems  
on storefront windows  
and ran

laughs passed though  
our fingers  
a school of fish

the poem won't go away  
clouds are laughs  
everyone knows that

one day the poets all  
showed up in the street  
this is real, the poem said

this is real  
the poem will open  
forever

the poem won't go away  
it will happen again  
the poets started showing up

the poets fought for rent control  
the poets fought for healthcare  
the poets fought for education

the poets fought for socialism  
the poets fought for communism  
the poets fought for open borders

and the grave won't shut up  
but it's okay

the grave won't shut up  
it's okay

grainy signed every art  
translates who sold her  
smell soft via

words si make standards who ou  
words si make standards who

words si make standards who  
words si make standards who  
words on i know many who

words si make standards  
symbols are symbols  
signed the shoulds

signing the shoulds  
signing the shoulds  
signing the shoulds  
signing the shoulds

he said it in a mood  
 the grave keeps singing      amaq no baqqaw sw  
 we believe the customers      ewobinaw mohimaw no  
 are the future      am baqqaw  
  
 so the students shut it down      dymoofit baqqaw aqgul  
 the students shut it down      am qigul  
 the students shut it down      dymoofit baqqaw a  
  
 the students shut it down      jobs news as now maqqab  
 over & over      erigul zuu shuul  
 the poem won't go away      tsuu aqbaan  
  
 the future is absent      am yah ipi beeq ill  
 children are children      tsuu aqbaan  
 clouds are laughs      biss maqqab leet si siit  
  
 students are anyone      farr al aqiq  
 students are anyone      amqab illi maqqab aqiq  
 who know the deal      amqab  
  
 petaled into some new thing      yewaa ag i aqbaan  
 we could use or toss      amqab maqqab illi aqiq  
 or riff off      qo gaikwaa kormaa  
  
 we taught each other how      amqab maqqab illi aqiq  
 to carry shards of heaven      amqab maqqab illi aqiq  
 friends left for us      amqab maqqab illi aqiq  
  
 what're you working on      amqab maqqab illi aqiq  
 a rose petal in my heart      amqab maqqab illi aqiq  
 pecker, a procession      amqab maqqab illi aqiq  
  
 of loosing desire & loss      qui tuus t'now every aqiq  
 a book of fishes      yalo aqiq  
 that mirror clouds      amqab maqqab illi aqiq  
  
 we could put all our books      qui tuus t'now every aqiq  
 together to make      yalo aqiq  
 one book of fish

Ryan Eckes is a poet from Philadelphia. His previous books are *fine nothing* (2019), *General Motors* (2018), *Valu-Plus* (2014), *Old News* (2011), and *when i come here* (2007). Recent poems can be read online in *Prolit*, *Entropy*, *The Tiny*, *Recenter Press Journal*, *Sundog Lit*, *DUSIE* and *Tripwire*.

the students who are  
over & over  
the poems we have  
written

the future is  
children are  
clouds are  
students are  
students are  
who know t



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radical paper press  
2020

radical paper press

2020

"copyright is for cops"

